

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

3 JULY 2007

REVISION OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND CORPORATE PLAN

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the revised strategic objectives and seek Members approval of the Corporate Plan 2007-10.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's strategic objectives were set for five years in 2003 and were formulated on the basis of: the Exeter Vision; shared Local Government Association (LGA)/government priorities; and guidance from the Audit Commission, particularly in respect of comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) requirements.
- 2.2 One of the Chief Executive's organisational objectives for 2006/07 was "to formally review our priority strategic objectives for the next five years, to ensure that our efforts and resources are directed to the most important and relevant purposes."
- 2.3 The Council's Best Value Performance Plan currently embodies much of the content that would be found in a Corporate Plan, including the Council's strategic objectives. However, the focus of a performance plan is on the reporting of performance. Revised guidance on Best Value Performance Plans¹ now presents an opportunity to develop the Performance Plan as a Corporate Plan and to re-launch the Council's revised strategic objectives. By creating a new Corporate Plan, the Council has the opportunity to set out more clearly the direction in which it intends to travel, recognising that the Council's priorities may need to be adjusted in the autumn.

3 REVIEWING THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 In November 2006, two externally facilitated workshops were held - one with Heads of Service and one with Directors and Portfolio Holders. The purpose of the workshops was to review the existing strategic objectives and set out where the Council wants to be in the future. During this process attendees took account of all the key challenges faced by the Council over the next three years and those issues that are of particular importance to the community. A "State of Exeter" report² on the social, economic and environmental issues facing the city informed this piece of work.

¹ The Government has reviewed the requirements 'better performing' authorities must adhere to in their Best Value Performance Plans. For authorities that are categorised in CPA as excellent the Government will accept their annual corporate plan as meeting the statutory requirement to prepare a Performance Plan - providing that it is identified as such and contains the information set out in para 4.2, necessary for Government to monitor performance.

² Available at www.exeter.gov.uk

3.2 The Corporate Plan has been built around the key priorities that we have set for the next three years. These are:

- a) working with partners to improve the quality of life in Exeter
- b) working with partners to improve the city
- c) improving the Council

There are 14 strategic objectives that fit beneath these three key priorities and these can be found on page 4 of the Corporate Plan.

3.3 The number of strategic objectives has been reduced from 36 to 14 and the focus of the revised objectives not only reflect the priorities of the Exeter Vision but also take account of the many new challenges faced by the Council, for example, community involvement, place shaping and efficiency savings.

3.4 Following publication of the Plan the Policy Unit will undertake a range of promotional activity to ensure that all officers and Members are aware of the revised strategic objectives and the role they have to play in helping to deliver them.

4 DEVELOPING THE CORPORATE PLAN

4.1 The aims of developing the Corporate Plan are:

- To promote understanding and ownership of the Council's priorities and to enable a more effective link between strategic objectives, SIPs and appraisal objectives (the new Performance Management system will enable more effective, accessible visualisation of this framework)
- To set out the annual priorities for the Council under each of the strategic objectives
- To shift to a focus on outcomes and evidence of how the Council is making a difference to the people of Exeter
- To set out a clear rationale behind the Council's priorities
- To explain how the Council is responding to community need
- To provide an accessible document for the public, members, stakeholders and staff
- To provide a useful tool for auditors reviewing the Council's CPA and Direction of Travel judgements
- To enable the Council's BVPI and other performance data to be annexed to the plan before the end of June each year.

4.2 Although the Corporate Plan will replace the Best Value Performance Plan, there are still certain requirements set out in Section 6 of the Local Government Act 1999 to which the Council must comply. A summary of these is set out below:

- A summary of the Council's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement
- Details of past, current and planned performance (to include all of the BVPIs, including targets for current and subsequent two years)
- Briefing statement on contracts awarded during the past year involving the transfer of staff (this will be included in the financial summary)
- Corporate Plan to be published by 30 June 2007
- Corporate Plan to be approved by Members before publication

4.3 All of the above requirements will be met by 30 June 2007.

5 CONTENT, FORMAT AND AUDIENCE OF THE CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 The Corporate Plan is organised around the Council's revised strategic objectives. It sets out the challenges faced by the Council over the next three years, the Council's recent key achievements and what it will achieve in the future, an overview of the Council's finances, an outline of the performance management framework and an overview of how the Council manages its risks.

5.2 The achievements and planned actions contained in the Corporate Plan are set at a high, over-arching level and responsibility for achieving the planned actions has been allocated to Directors. This is so that the Plan maintains a strategic focus. Service Improvement Plans will provide an overview of achievements and actions at a service level.

5.3 Achievements against the planned actions in last year's Performance Plan and the performance indicator results will be attached as appendices to the Corporate Plan. In subsequent years, progress against the Council's Corporate Equality Scheme will also be reported as an appendix to the Corporate Plan.

5.4 As with last year, the Corporate Plan will be primarily web-based and published on the Council's website for easier access and navigation. The Plan will also be available in bound hard copies in libraries and at Council receptions. Council Members will be sent a hard copy on request.

5.5 The target audience will be elected members, SMT, heads of service, auditors, inspectors and grant/award providers, staff, together with external audiences (central government, local government organisations, other local authorities, partners and local businesses). Whilst the plan would also be available for residents, the summary document which accompanies Council Tax Bills will continue to relay summary information about the Council's priorities, performance and value for money.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That the draft Corporate Plan 2007-10 be endorsed and that any necessary drafting amendments before publication be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TEAM
June 2007